

Alexandra Clee

From: noreply@civicplus.com
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2016 8:44 PM
To: Alexandra Clee; Lee Newman; Elisa Litchman
Subject: Online Form Submittal: Contact Planning Board

The following form was submitted via your website: Contact Planning Board

Full Name:: Amy Gworek

Email Address:: amy.gworek@nemoves.com

Address:: One Chapel Street

City/Town:: Needham

State:: MA

Zip Code:: 02492

Telephone Number:: 617-571-2390

Comments / Questions: I attended the proposed zoning new construction home regulations today at Powers Hall. I am impressed with all the work that has been completed and am sure there is more to come. However, as a realtor, and an 18 year Needham resident is that the zoning generally appears to make frontage somewhat tighter increasing the set back by 5 ft while allowing for windows decks and covered porches to be excluded. And then allow decreasing the rear setback by 10ft and increasing the lot area coverage almost 15%. Based on my experience this will increase the amount of massive buildings on smaller lots. Additionally and possibly more important is that I often have buyers who are trying to decide if they should "add on" to their home or buy "new" with out considering the zoning for additions and remodeling at the same time as this new contraction zoning, many will be looking to tear down their existing home instead of an addition. There is a need for inventory in not just the \$700 range as mentioned today but also in the \$900,000 - \$1,200,000 range a teardown lot costs anywhere from about 700k - 850k and new construction is hitting close to \$1.8M for those lots sold.

Thanks for all that you have done. Please consider issuing remodeling and addition zoning at the same time and increasing the size of the back setback as well as the lot area coverage.

Thanks
Amy Gworek

Additional Information:

Form submitted on: 4/5/2016 8:43:42 PM

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Alexandra Clee

From: Alexandra Clee
Sent: Thursday, April 07, 2016 2:18 PM
To: 'amy.gworek@nemoves.com'
Cc: Lee Newman; Elisa Litchman
Subject: RE: Online Form Submittal: Contact Planning Board
Attachments: Lge Hse Study public hearing narrative FINAL.pdf

Hi Amy,

Thank you for your comments and for attending the meeting on Tuesday. Zoning related to additions to existing homes is the next thing that the Committee will be looking at. We may have the proposal ready by the June public workshop, though I'm not certain.

I do want to clarify a few things from your email below. I know the material was presented quickly, so it's hard to digest it all. 1) Although the setbacks are being increased from 12.5 feet to 14 feet (on a conforming lot), the proposal is to measure it to the foundation, not the overhand (as currently measured), so it won't have as big an impact as just increasing the setback without changing how it is measured; 2) the rear setback is proposed to be reduced by 5 feet - from 20 feet to 15 feet; and 3) the lot coverage is proposed to be increased by 3 % (from 25-28%), and only if a Floor-to-Area ratio is added to help regulate the massing.

I have attached a memo which you may find helpful (you may have already received it).

Thanks again for your thoughtful input.

Thanks, alex.

Alexandra Clee
Assistant Town Planner
Town of Needham
781-455-7550 Ext 271

-----Original Message-----

From: noreply@civicplus.com [mailto:noreply@civicplus.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2016 8:44 PM
To: Alexandra Clee; Lee Newman; Elisa Litchman
Subject: Online Form Submittal: Contact Planning Board

The following form was submitted via your website: Contact Planning Board

Full Name:: Amy Gworek

Email Address:: amy.gworek@nemoves.com

Address:: One Chapel Street

Alexandra Clee

From: Elizabeth Grimes <egrimes@ligris.com>
Sent: Friday, April 08, 2016 8:47 AM
To: Lee Newman; Alexandra Clee
Subject: FW: Teardown proposals

Elizabeth J. Grimes, Esquire

40 Grove Street, Suite 435
Wellesley, MA 02482
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LIGRIS + ASSOCIATES PC

Attorneys and Counselors at Law

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From: Fleming, Ceci [<mailto:ceci.fleming@nemoves.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2016 12:24 PM
To: Elizabeth Grimes
Subject: Teardown proposals

Liz, It was great to see you today. Your committee has done a great deal of work on the first draft of proposals that you reviewed today. I know there are still lots of conversations to be had and revisions to come. I wanted to put a few of my thoughts out to you. My perspective is as an informed resident who did a large addition/renovation on our first home, bought and tore down a home for the land to build a new home for my family and as an active real estate agent in town. I am putting out as many questions as I am solutions here. I recognize that many tear downs are done by end-users (the home owners themselves) looking to build a home for their family that fits their needs, and not just spec builders.

1) Thought needs to go into whether the proposals would apply to large scale renovations or just to true and complete teardown/new build homes. There exists a large chance of any new regulations being able to be skirted if the home owners or builders get creative in their design work, leaving a part of the original foundation and framing and just calling it an addition and renovation so that they can fall under the older guidelines for setbacks etc.

2) In my opinion from talking with neighbors and the general public what bothers people is less the structure/size of the new house that is built, but more the loss of mature landscaping and drainage issues. I understand the proposals today are preliminary but I wonder if there is more that can be done to regulate drainage into the town sewer or a dry well for all gutters in new construction or regarding the planting of new trees.

3) I take objection to all lots greater than 15,000 being lumped together. A land owner of a 17,000 sq ft lot or a 20,000 sq ft lot should be afforded more opportunity to build a house that is scaled to the size of their lot, IF that is what they want and have the means to do. There is a premium that is paid for a larger lot. In my opinion the current proposals make it limiting for families who desire a larger home, with potentially a master bedroom suite on first floor plus 4 bedrooms on 2nd, or a 2nd floor with 5 bedrooms to be able to provide that space for their family.

4) I also object to the categories of lot sizes. A 9,900 sq ft lot may only be allowed 3610 sq ft (1st and 2nd floor) and a 10,019 sq ft lot is allowed 3990 sq ft (1st and 2nd floor). To the naked eye very few people would be able to tell a 9,990 sq ft lot from a 10,019 sq ft lot from each other. By setting limits on the FAR within defined ranges you can have disproportionate sized homes on lots that are only a small bit off from each other in terms of size. If FAR is something that the committee wants to maintain, I would suggest considering a flat ratio that is applied on a case by case basis by using .38 of each individual lot. So in this case you might see:

9,100 sq ft lot yields a max FAR of 3458 sq ft

9,900 sq ft lot yields a max FAR of 3796 sq ft

10,019 sq ft lots yields a max FAR of 3807 sq ft

10,880 sq ft lots yields a max FAR of 4134 sq ft

5) I see a trend for 3-season or screened porches to be a desired feature in new houses. I know these proposals allow for covered porches to go 50 sq ft into setbacks. However it wasn't clear to me if a screened porch would count toward FAR.

6) I know these proposals are currently targeted for SRB and General Residence. I believe that a variance (or maybe special approval) is needed for a 3-car garage in these districts, but I think that a 600 sq foot garage allowance is too limiting. Not all builders or end users will have the space, budget or desire for a 3-car garage, but for those situations that it is desired and can fit within setbacks I think your committee would be wise to allow for that.

7) I really like the suggestion of a half story above the garage when it's far forward on the lot. I think some of the complaints about new construction are the esthetic of the house and I do hear a lot of negative about the large garages.

As I continue to mull these things over I'll reach out if I have additional thoughts or questions.

-Ceci

Ceci Fleming, REALTOR
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Alexandra Clee

From: noreply@civicplus.com
Sent: Friday, April 08, 2016 1:05 PM
To: Alexandra Clee; Lee Newman; Elisa Litchman
Subject: Online Form Submittal: Contact Planning Board

The following form was submitted via your website: Contact Planning Board

Full Name:: Shane Delaney

Email Address:: sd9er@yahoo.com

Address::

City/Town::

State::

Zip Code::

Telephone Number::

Comments / Questions: LARGE HOUSE REVIEW

Hello –

My name is Shane Delaney, I grew up in Needham, live in Charlestown now, and have been building new houses in Needham for the past 14 years (and my father built in Needham for over 25). Wanted to offer some feedback about the meeting this past week.

Firstly, I'd like to thank you and the committee for what was clearly a lot of work, and what was clearly very thoughtful work. I think you're taking a realistic approach to the issue. New houses will be built when there's money. I think your overall goal was clear: to create by-laws that encourage/promote/regulate aesthetically pleasing and appropriately scaled homes.

I agree with almost everything you put forth. I try to build attractive and considerate homes, and your proposals wouldn't change anything in terms of what I build. In other words, I think you've pinpointed the issues.

What I think works:

- 1 - The garage game plan is great and will work.
- 2- The plan to offset the square footage on first and second floor to inhibit gigantic boxes will work as well.
- 3- Also, overhangs and bay windows in the setbacks is a great idea, both from the standpoint of encouraging detail but also a practical point of view for builders, engineers and inspectors.

My only issue is the averaged-out front setback. I personally don't feel houses need to be in a straight line for a neighborhood to look good. And it's just a headache for everyone involved: architects, engineers, builders, and inspectors. The pain-to-reward for me is not worth it. I think the 25' is great. Keep it simple. The averaging is a headache.

Finally, I really appreciate the common sense approach to FAR in terms of basements and attics. The goal is the outside look of the houses. Whether or not the basement and attic are completed is irrelevant. And a FAR including basements and attics would hurt builders and therefore building in Needham.

That's it. Thanks again for your work.

-Shane

Additional Information:

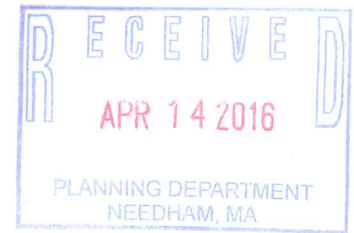
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Form Address: <http://www.needhamma.gov/Forms.aspx?FID=229>

75 Douglas Road
Needham, MA 02492



13 April 2016

Ms. Elizabeth Grimes, Chairman
Needham Planning Board
Needham Town Hall
Needham, MA 02492

In reply to your suggestion in the Needham Times I am forwarding some random commentary with respect to drainage and the tear-down issue that is affecting so many of us.

From our point of view the allowable size house replacing a tear-down should primarily rest with a ratio of house to size (and topography) of the lot of land it is built upon. That is, how much permeable land must be forever free of garages and other utility buildings, driveways (macadam and concrete), pools, paved pathways, patios, outdoor living rooms and so forth. If the house structure alone reaches the ratio limit, then any of the afore-mentioned goodies will be noncompliant.

The havoc that is being caused by an alarming absence of street drainage must be part of the decision-making process now. Swills dug into backyards does nothing to solve the problem and no doubt is a factor in the rising ground water level in Needham (Wachusett Road?)

The Needham Times article detailing the first round of proposals towards a decision regarding lot size vis a vis new house size does not reveal any consideration of precipitation capacity as a determining factor.

Please help those of us who must deal with this lack on a daily basis and urge the concept of water management into the process. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Margaret S. Dasha

Margaret S. Dasha

April 12, 2016

Ms. Elizabeth Grimes
Planning Board
Needham Town Hall
1471 Highland Ave.
Needham, MA. 02492



Dear Ms. Grimes:

It is with keen interest that I watch the discussions now underway considering potential changes to zoning for "teardowns". Some points that need be considered that underlie these redevelopments in my opinion are:

- The purchase and redevelopment of a lot is a first and foremost an economic equation. The question is how to wring the maximum amount of profit/commission out of a parcel at the going market rate? Statements made by the real estate agent and contractor community to the contrary do not hold up under scrutiny.
- The argument that this burst of new home construction is "good for your property values" is a weak timber upon which to support the large home redevelopment theory. Most people enjoy reaping a fair market price for their property but usually do not care for the prospect of higher property taxes. My property value does not make me feel good if I do not enjoy the aesthetics of where I live.
- How close do you want to live to your neighbors? Eventually if every home was taken down and the lot developed to the maximum as currently allowed people would no doubt object to the lack of space between homes. Do you like seeing your neighbor clear enough through their window to tell what they are cooking for dinner? I have lived in the city and can testify that the reason people have always gravitated to the suburbs was to have some open space. When the space is gone it seldom comes back.

This situation is one that needs to be addressed and a final action plan decided upon soon as land is being gobbled up that cannot be replaced. It is to me ironic that the Eversource Tree cutting program is

viewed as an assault upon Mother Nature but building the largest allowable structure on a lot is somehow viewed as an inviolate right.

The town is having an identity crisis; it will be interesting to see if we sell out. It used to be said it is "Nicer in Needham" maybe not so much when there are no more yards to play in because they have turned into Mudrooms.

Thanks for looking over my views, the Times said that you wished to hear from residents so this is my 2 cents.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul Buresh".

Paul Buresh

102 Elmwood Rd.

Needham, MA. 02492